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ABSTRACT

To analyze the patterns of newspaper news sources in a developing nation and the geographic focus of news and news subject matter categories, an analysis was conducted of the English-language "Egyptian Gazette," the official organ of the Arab Socialist Union. Primary data for the study were the front pages selected at random from the newspaper over an eight-month period. Items were classified according to their news agency source, their geographic focus, and their subject matter. The results showed that (1) the majority of news was from Western news agencies, (2) the geographic focus of the stories was primarily toward First and Second World countries, (3) subject matter was international rather than domestic in focus, and (4) editorial focus was predominately Arab-state oriented. (FL)

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Foreign News Agency Influences on a Developing Country Press (Egypt)

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A universal assumption concerning the relationship of mass media and national development is that the two are concomitant. In other words, a country will find it difficult to achieve certain degrees of development without a developed media system. The developed media system ultimately leads to a more developed country.

In Western societies the assumptions are perpetuated by the premises of freedom of speech and press. The implication is that a free press will produce adequate coverage of a diversity of topics. However, in Third World and Communist countries, this implication is not acceptable. Researchers (Kirkpatrick, 1978; Aggarwala, 1978) report that in such countries there are trends for the recommended substitution of a free press by a balanced press.

Halloran (1970) and UNESCO (1977) state that media systems will be effective only if news flow regarding developing and Third World countries comes from these countries, as well as going to them. Dodson and Hachten (1973) indicate that free press for a free flow of information ultimately results in domination of weaker news producing systems by stronger news producing systems. Reference is, of course, to the dominant western news agencies. Rachty (1978) notes that such systems create circumstances where less developed

countries (LDC's) become consumers of a product they do not create. They see themselves, and other countries in their geographic area, and the world as a whole through the eyes of the major international news agencies: Associated Press, United Press International (American); Reuters (British); Agence France Presse (French). This is de facto determination of the revelance of information for LDC's. Schiller (1976) and others (Intermedia, 1977) identify the syndrome as cultural imperialism.

Tatarian (1978a) summarizes Third World criticism of the major western news agencies:

1. They attempt to make young or developing states look corrupt or inept by focusing on negative news.
2. There is an imbalance in the flow of news from the developed to the developing world.
3. There is a disparity of quality and quantity of regional coverage about and to the Third World.
4. They seek simple solutions to development problems.
5. They attempt to apply Cold War ramifications such as "anti-American" or "pro-Soviet" to Third World situations which may not be applicable.
6. They devote greatest attention to the Third World in times of disaster, crisis, and/or confrontations.
7. News of Third World development which acquaints others in this category of efforts toward economic, social and cultural progress is lacking.

Research notes a need to further study these criticisms that ways may be discovered to alleviate them. Tatarian (1978b) precisely states the need for research: We must undertake research on the range of news and information available within first, second and third worlds and on the actual use and distribution of such material within those areas. Pinch (1978), Rachty (1978) and Schramm, et. al. (1978), report data which evaluates the cultural imperialism thesis. The Pinch study concerns sixteen geographically diverse LDC's. The Rachty study concentrates on Arab States and the Schramm, et. al., study focuses on the Far East.

However, these three studies report news analysis data from a restrictive five day within one month time period. Understandably, it is desirable to have unified units of measurements for a diversity of geographic locations, but the resulting data may be affected by various major news events in one or more of the geographic areas and/or particular countries.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

To analyze over-time patterns of an LDC newspaper news sources, geographic focus of news and news subject matter categories, this study reports data obtained from an eight month analysis of an English-language Egyptian newspaper. The data base is Al Goumhuriya; in the English version, Egyptian Gazette.

This newspaper is the official organ of the Arab Socialist Union. It is published in three languages, Arabic, English, and French; thus, it is a paper with a broad readership of non-native residents (1978 average daily circulation was: Arabic, 275,000; French, 16,000; English, 12,000). Foreign language newspaper daily circulation in Egypt was approximately 125,000 in 1978.

Whether in foreign languages or Arabic, 'format and style of Egyptian newspapers reflect British and American influences.... Foreign news coverage and analysis are featured extensively; the front page carries the most important international and national news.... Much space is also devoted to sports, the arts, and cultural items' (Nyrop, 1976, p. 237). 'Al Goumhuriya reportedly features political items, economic news and articles on social development' (Nyrop, p. 238). Previous research on Egyptian Arabic newspapers has thus provided indications of what analysis of Egyptian English newspaper content might be.

The above data reflect fundamental inadequacies for assessing the potential cultural imperialism inherent in Egyptian newspapers: 1) They are too generalized. 2) They are based upon a limited time period.

ASSUMPTIONS

Based upon a review of relevant literature, this study was conducted with five assumptions about the Egyptian Gazette:

1. Source of news will predominantly be from western news agencies.

2. Geographic focus of news will be First World countries.

3. Frequency ranking of the first three news subject matter categories will be domestic politics, domestic economics, and domestic social development.

4. As a class, domestic news will be more frequent than international news.

5. Editorial focus will be Arab state, oriented to political issues.

METHODOLOGY

Primary data for this study were front page news items obtained from selected and random editions of Al Goumhuriya from October 1, 1977 through May 31, 1978. A second randomly selected data base was obtained from a two month time period in 1979 as a validity cross-check of trends identified from the 1977-78 time period. In the selected sample (N=40) the study employed editions from every sixth day so the source of news would not be patterned by day-of-the-week cycles. Random One sample (N=14) was obtained from the 1977-78 time period. Random Two sample (N=7) was obtained from January 15 to March 15, 1979 newspapers.[1]

News items obtained for the data base were placed in three categories:

1. The source of the news was recorded as from Associated Press (AP), United Press International (UPI), Reuters (R), Agence France Presse (AFP), Middle East News Agency (MENA), Gazette Special Services (GSS).

2. Geographic focus of the news was recorded as focusing on the host country (Egypt), First, Second, or Third World countries.[2]

3. News items were placed in subject matter categories. Categories utilized are modifications of thos previously employed by Schramm, Rachty, and Pinch.[3] Subsequent to recording data, preliminary analysis displayed that there was a high percentage of International news concerned with the Arab-Israeli conflict. These subject matter division data were re-evaluated to more appropriately identify the Israeli-Arab conflict as general international news.

Put Table 1 about here.

Table 1 presents the data base for each of the categorization areas. Also in table 1 are reported data for advertisements which appeared on the front page below the masthead in the study samples.

Table 2 presents editorial focus through correlation of geographic area of coverage and subject matter categories for editorials occurring in the sample newspapers. Subject matter categories and geographic areas correspond to those employed in Table 1.

An editorial focus was determined by categorizing editorial content according to items 2 and 3 above.

Put Table 2 about here.

RESULTS

Assumption 1 - Source of News: The data revealed that no news items were printed as being received from AFP. This finding correlates to Rachty's data in which, over a five day period, only one news item obtained from AFP was printed in Al Goumhuriya. The majority of news was from Western news agencies. Note that if MENA and GSS as sources were combined, they would only rank third in frequency of news items. The cross-check data (Random Two) exhibit

an increase in percentage of items from GSS. The assumption is generally confirmed: Sources for news are predominantly Western news agencies.

Assumption 2 - Focus of the News: From the primary data, geographic focus of the news was clearly predominant toward Host country. Focus toward First and Second World areas was much greater than toward Third World areas. The cross-check data (Random One) indicate a distinct percentage reversal for predominant area of focus with Host country being ranked third. The assumption is generally rejected: Geographic focus of news was not First World countries.

Assumption 3 - Frequency Rankings of Subject Matter Categories: The rankings are not as predicted. Table 1 indicates the first three ranks are International Relations, War/Military, Crime/Disaster. Earlier research suggested the first three ranks migh stress domestic politics and economic development rather than the disaster/crisis topics suggested by Tatarian. The cross-check data (Random One and Two) indicate no essential differences in ranks for all subject matter categories. The assumption is generally rejected: Subject matter frequency was not domestically oriented.

Assumption 4 - Domestic News Frequency versus International News Frequency: Summing all domestic news categories, International News was almost three times more frequent. The data reflect the implications of assumption three; thus, assumption four is generally rejected.

Assumption 5 - Editorial Focus: Fifty-four percent of the editorials were in the Arab-Israeli classification. Total Arab State coverage, including political issues, was fifty-seven percent of the editorials. The assumption is generally confirmed: Editorial focus was predominantly Arab-state oriented.

DISCUSSION

When data do/do not conform to predictions there is a tendency to isolate causality. In newspaper content studies, the rationalization is often that extremely salient topics have swayed the directions of coverage. This is often the case with restrictive time period studies. However, this study's data represent three-quarters of a year time span, with delayed-date cross checks.

Thus, it is difficult to suggest that Anwar Sadat's Christmas 1977 visit to Israel, and the intensified Arab/Israeli peace talks distorted the data. Were this the case, every major story, national or international, would have the same potential.

Granted, the frequency of the Arab/Israeli issue was disproportionate to toal news coverage; as Israel was defined as Second World, this increased frequency beyond predictable levels and altered the news geographic focus. In the cross-check data sample, the Iran revolution should have altered the news focus and subject matter category percentages.

The same factors created the over-all editorial image. Occasionally a news issue achieved enough saliency to be treated editorially. However, of all editorials, only one-fourth related to issues other than the Arab/Israeli conflict, Wars and Military, or Crimes and Disaster issues. Egyptian domestic issues were covered less than ten percent; yet, internally, Egypt's political party line is national development.

What is perhaps most disappointing regarding the desire to reduce cultural imperialism is that, even with the major non-western news agency in the Arab world (MENA) located in Egypt, the primary news generation for this LDC press during the research time period was American and British sources. The 1977 UNESCO-sponsored Declaration on the Mass Media had the specific objective of encouraging free flow and wider and more balanced dissemination of information. The Egyptian party press has seemingly not accepted this UNESCO goal and challenge.

Reasons for the existance of the "balanced news" problem have been identified; the difficulty lies in initiating actions--such as the multinational news pool suggested by Tatarian to solve the problem.

Particularly in LDC's, the national image is carried via the print medium. The press will normally represent the more elitist opinion and development elements of the society. For foreigners within and external to the country, the images may be shaped by the informational elements presented by a particular medium.

Egypt, which apparently possesses the resources to alter its information-giving capacity, to date is not utilizing them. As the leader in Arab state mass media communication, it should initiate its potential as an agent for change.

Table 1

Egyptian Gazette News by Source, Area
Coverage and Subject Matter Categories

DATA BASE				NEWS SOURCE					AREA COVERAGE				NEWS SUBJECT MATTER CATEGORIES											Advertisements
Sample	Sample N	Total Items N	Internal Factors	Reuter	Assoc. Press	United Press	MENA*	GSS**	Host	1st	2nd	3rd	International Relations	Arab/Israeli	War/Military	Crime/ Disaster	Domestic Politics	Miscellaneous	Dom. Economics	Educ./Culture	Science/Health	Social Dev.	Sports	Religion	
Selected	40	510	n	130	132	117	70	61	157	132	137	77	250	169	72	53	49	24	14	11	9	8	11	9	55
			%	25.4	25.8	22.9	13.7	11.9	30.7	25.8	26.8	15.0	49.0	33.1	14.1	10.3	9.6	4.7	2.7	2.1	1.7	1.5	2.1	1.7	1.37
Random 1	14	154	n	48	41	37	18	10	33	52	45	24	72	47	35	17	13	3	4	3	3	3	--	1	21
			%	31.1	25.5	24.0	11.6	6.4	21.4	33.7	29.2	15.5	46.7	30.5	22.7	11.0	8.4	1.9	2.5	1.9	1.9	1.9	--	.5	1.71
Random 2	7	71	n	24	27	10	6	14	18	16	19	18	20	7	10	18	6	3	5	4	2	1	1	1	6
			%	33.8	23.9	14.1	8.0	19.7	25.3	22.5	26.7	25.3	28.1	9.8	14.0	25.3	8.4	4.2	7.0	5.6	2.8	1.4	1.4	1.4	.85
Total	61	735	n	202	190	164	94	85	208	200	201	119	223	223	117	88	68	30	23	18	14	12	12	11	82
			%	27.4	25.8	22.3	12.7	11.5	28.2	27.2	27.3	16.1	46.5	30.3	15.9	11.9	9.2	4.0	3.1	2.4	1.9	1.6	1.6	1.4	1.34

*Middle East News Agency
**Gazette Special Services

Table 2

Editorial Focus by Area Coverage
and Subject Matter Categories,
Combined Sample Data Base

Area Coverage	Subject Matter Categories								
	Domestic Politics	Domestic Economics	Social Development	Arab/ Israeli	International Relations	War/ Military	Crime/ Disaster	Education	Totals
Host		2	1	5		1	1	1	11
First		1		7		1		1	10
Second				18	3	7	2	1	31
Third	1			3		4	1		9
Totals	1	3	1	33	3	13	4	3	61

FOOTNOTES

1. Dates of Egyptian Gazette Samples:

Selected Sample -

10-02-77	12-14-77	02-28-78
10-08-77	12-20-77	03-03-78
10-14-77	12-26-77	03-09-78
10-20-77	01-02-78	03-15-78
10-26-77	01-08-78	03-21-78
11-01-77	01-14-78	03-27-78
11-07-77	01-20-78	04-03-78
11-13-77	01-26-78	04-09-78
11-19-77	02-04-78	04-15-78
11-25-77	02-10-78	04-21-78
12-02-77	02-16-78	04-27-78
12-08-77	02-22-78	

Random One Sample -

10-06-77	12-30-77	04-11-78
10-31-77	01-29-78	04-16-78
11-11-77	02-11-78	05-12-78
11-26-77	03-08-78	05-12-78
12-05-77	03-25-78	

Random Two Sample -

01-30-79	02-15-79	03-04-79
02-01-79	02-26-79	03-09-79
02-04-79		

2. Geographic Area Coverage Classifications:

Host: Egypt

First World: Britain, Canada, France, Japan, Soviet Union, United States, West Germany, Israel

Second World: Australia, Europe, South Africa

Third World: Africa, Asia, Central and Latin America, India, Middle East

3. News Subject Matter Category Descriptions: Domestic Politics - News about the internal and domestic acts of a government of a nation from which the news originates. Domestic Economics - News about a country's economic and business life which deals with the management of the economic affairs of a government, private industry or company, with reference to its sources of income, tax, expenditures, prices, banking, trade, commerce, and so on. News of multinational corporations. Social Development - News of general human conditions developments, events, activities, problems, and other issues when used in the context of the human developments (i.e. human right to a job, food, housing, etc.). International Relations - News of formal diplomatic relations between nations; includes news of official activities of ambassadors and other officials, negotiations between countries. War/Military - News of actual hostilities between two or more nations on activities of defense departments of nations, training of personnel, manuevers, and other military operations. Includes stories on guerilla and political terrorist actions, and intelligence operations and activities. Includes civil war and widespread violent demonstrations. Crime/Disaster - News involving disasters of nature, explosions, transportation accidents, accidents befalling individuals, property damage, injury and death. News that deals with interpretations by courts, civil suits and lasw not political or economic in character. Includes news of criminal trials, acts of crimes, arrests, punishments, jail and prison-conditions, etc. Science/Health - News on scientific, health, medical, space and technological developments and discoveries in these fields. Education/Culture - News involving energy developments, problems: environmental-concerns, and conservation developments and concerns. Social items, prominent people, fine arts and entertainment. Sports - All sports events, whether individual or group, organized or not. Religion - News of religious organizations, processes, issues. Miscellaneous - Topics not covered by other categories, such as trivia anecdotes, general informational announcements, etc.

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